

COST Action 18119 Who Cares In Europe?

Workshop

**At the Nexus of Voluntary Action and Public Policies: Rethinking Care
in Southeastern Europe**

26-27 August 2021

Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Organised by Fabio Giomi (CNRS, CETOBaC, Paris) and Isidora Grubački (CEU Budapest and INZ Ljubljana)

Organised in the framework of the COST Action 18119 *Who Cares In Europe?*, this workshop gathers historians having two features in common; First, currently doing research in the “State-voluntary association ecosystem” in the domain of care, broadly intended; Second, being interested in Southeastern European societies (XIX-XXI centuries). Instead of presenting in extenso their empirical findings, the participants are invited to focus on the methodological and theoretical issues structuring their research endeavour. What kind of questions guide your research? Which are the concepts used to explore the grey zone between state and voluntary action? What methodological dilemmas did you have to face in the different phases of your research, from archive exploration to writing process? The idea is to create an informal space of reflection and exchange on our research practices.

The expected output of this workshop will be the publication of a collection of research notes in a peer-reviewed journal, in which different scholars showcase their own way of rethinking the nexus between voluntary action and public policies. The goal is to demonstrate how Southeastern Europe, a segment of the continent usually considered peripheral both in the scholarships of civil society and welfare, can be a precious observation point in order to renew current research on care.

Preliminary program:

Thursday, August 26, 2021

10:00 Gathering, coffee & informal introduction

10:30-11:00 Introduction (30 min)

11:00-12:30 Session 1

Daša Ličen, *Charitable Associations Through the Lens of Anthropology*

Lucija Balikić, *State, voluntarism and the body: selected theoretical issues of writing the intellectual history of Southeast European civil society of the first half of the 20th century*

12:30-14:30 Lunch break

14:30-16:00 Session 2

Jelena Seferović, *Theoretical dilemmas in the research of (in)formal social support of women to war orphans after the Second World War in central Croatia*

Ana Kladnik, *Rethinking Local Self-Governance and Voluntary Practices during Yugoslav Socialist Self-Management*

19:00 Dinner (Gostilna "Pod vrbo", to be confirmed)

Friday, August 27, 2021

09:30-11:00 Session 3

Fabio Giomi, *What is a voluntary association?*

Jelena Tešija, *Writing gender and labor history of the Yugoslav co-operative movement from the end of the 19th century to the early 1950s*

11:00-11:30 Coffee break

11:30-13:00 Session 4

Alexandra Ghit, *Women's voluntary associations with "the state back in": Potentials and conundrums*

Isidora Grubački, *Defining feminist associations in interwar Yugoslavia*

13:00-14:30 Lunch break

14:30-16:00 Roundtable – Concluding thoughts

List of participants:

- Alex Ghit (CEU, Vienna GhitA@phd.ceu.edu)
- Ana Kladnik (INZ, Ljubljana akladnik@gmail.com), *Rethinking Local Self-Governance and Voluntary Practices during Yugoslav Socialist Self-Management*

- Daša Ličen (Institute of Slovenian Ethnology, Ljubljana dasa.licen@zrc-sazu.com), *Charitable Associations Through the Lens of Anthropology*
- Fabio Giomi (CNRS, CETOBaC, Paris, fabio.giomi@gmail.com) (WG leader)
- Isidora Grubački (CEU, Budapest, and INZ, Ljubljana Grubacki_Isidora@phd.ceu.edu (MC Substitute)
- Jelena Seferović (Institute for Anthropology, Zagreb jelenaseferovic@yahoo.com)
- Jelena Tešija (CEU, Vienna tesija_jelena@phd.ceu.edu)
- Lucija Balikić (CEU, Budapest Balikic_Lucija@phd.ceu.edu)

ABSTRACTS:

Daša Ličen, *Charitable Associations Through the Lens of Anthropology*

Understanding historical processes with the help of theoretical concepts has in the past decades become a norm also in the Southeast European scholarly world. There is, however, still much that the anthropological tradition can contribute to the investigation of past caritative and humanitarian practices, especially regarding the established accounts on the extreme benevolence and liberalism of charity initiatives. Mauss's famous essay where he called into question the act of gift-giving and interpreted it as an obligation, an exchange, and in general a part of the economic system has been relevant in disentangling endowment and other humanitarian practices. His arguments, for instance, question the understanding of the associations supporting elementary schooling in the late Habsburg Trieste as entirely altruistic. Yet more importantly, contemporary anthropological studies of the cultural logic of care initiatives and charity are valuable too, particularly when it comes to the formerly socialist states because the present life of charitable associations is rather similar to the pre-ww2 state of affairs, when the state provided only limited social care and left the burden in the hands of the civil society. The work of anthropologists like Peter Redfield and John Hanson hence facilitates in comprehending how class-centered, exclusionary, and elite affirming the ritualized life of charitable voluntary associations normally is (and was). After all, behind an illusion of innocence such associations amplify the supposedly reasonable unequal distribution of means. In practical terms, how exactly did the numerous charity balls that took place in pre-ww1 Trieste contribute to the general well being of the local population?

Lucija Balikić, *State, voluntarism and the body: selected theoretical issues of writing the intellectual history of Southeast European civil society of the first half of the 20th century*

Research on Southeast European voluntary associations pertaining to body politics, nationalism, democratic participation and welfare usually has to account for the association's relationship with and function in regard to the state, and is often faced with a number of methodological issues. In regard to the former, this presentation will focus on the political-social morphology of voluntary associations and their relationship by providing examples of those actively contesting the state or directly supporting certain (radical) political parties; those who actively participate in state-building and/or providing state-legitimacy; those who provide care only for certain groups and are competing with the state in that regard and those that facilitate care-based policies in exchange for ideological education of their subjects.

Moreover, a number of concepts for capturing the nexus between state and voluntary association will be proposed and discussed, such as: extension of the state or a political party, alternative state-building, creating an alternative public sphere or an alternative type of politics (as opposed to the state-forming / state-promoted one), as well as competing for citizens' loyalty.

Lastly, a methodology customized for the purposes of writing intellectual history will be presented with special regards to treating the intellectuals within and outside of the association (synchronically and diachronically), changing morphology of the association and usage of primary sources, namely periodicals. In all of the above, the question of Southeast Europe as a research category will be valorized, not least because of its multi-imperial heritage and the notable processes of imperial collapse, founding of the new nation-states and the consequent need for developing public policies pertaining to care in these complex historical contexts.

Ana Kladnik, *Rethinking Local Self-Governance and Voluntary Practices during Yugoslav Socialist Self-Management*

The presentation focuses on voluntary practices within the system of Yugoslav socialist self-management at the level of local self-governance in the municipalities and local

communities. In order to assess the effectiveness of voluntary work, the paper investigates the connectedness of inhabitants through the concept of social capital.

Jelena Seferovic, *Theoretical dilemmas in the research of (in)formal social support of women to war orphans after the Second World War in central Croatia*

The paper focuses on theoretical considerations of women's participation in (in)formal social actions organized to provide social support to war orphans after the Second World War in central Croatia. That implies theoretical analysis of women's involvement in the process of institutionalization of this population in the orphanages "Laduč", "Vrbina" and "Mokrice", as well as their engagement in terms of providing social support to orphans during their stay in these institutions. The key research question is: to what extent is it possible to contextualize the knowledge of Western European theorists in relation to the chosen topic with regard to the cultural, socio-economic and other features of the former Socialist Republic of Croatia?

Fabio Giomi, *What is a voluntary association?*

In some pieces of scholarship from the late 1980s, the French historian Maurice Agulhon - worldly known for his work on voluntary action in early modern France - expressed regret for the place that historians, and social scientists more in general, assigned to voluntary associations. According to him, these specific organisations were mostly studied as a tool, as an instrumental device, and rarely made a research topic as such. In other words, scholars of different disciplines and fields tended to analyse (groups of) voluntary associations to tackle different historical processes e.g. the nationalization of the masses, female empowerment, class stratification, transformation of sociability and welfare and so on; but *associational culture*, in its historical unity and specificity, stays at the margins of the picture.

Having in mind Agulhon's words, and putting them in dialogue with my empirical research on volunteerism in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia (1870s-1940s), I would like to address a thorny (at least to me!) issue: what is a voluntary association? What do have in common, for instance, human organisations such as quarter-based philanthropic organisations, nation-wide gymnastic federations, transnational feminist organisations, operating in different times and places, with different size, goals and agendas? How such a highly varied, unstable and dispersed constellation can be considered a legitimate object for historical analysis? And more importantly: how does a deeper understanding of it may contribute to refreshing our understanding of Yugoslav history?

Jelena Tešija, *Writing gender and labor history of the Yugoslav co-operative movement from the end of the 19th century to the early 1950s*

I am at the beginning of my research endeavor that aims to shed light on a neglected part of labor history in the Yugoslav lands – the co-operative movement during the first half of the 20th century – with a specific focus on the gendered, transnational, and long-term history of the movement. This presentation will focus on key conceptual dilemmas and research questions guiding my work on different organizational forms, activist repertoires, agendas, and contributions of women in the co-operative movement.

In general, the diversity within the co-operative movement - in terms of models of organizing and ideologies - is one of the key characteristics of the movement. Political neutrality, a relationship with a state, a role in the nation-building, class alliances, unity of different types of co-operatives, complex relationship with(in) the labor movement are just some of the issues relevant for co-operative ideologies but also for diverse global history and historiography of the movement. Creating a research design that would bring these diverse organizations under the same analytical framework in Yugoslav lands is, thus, a challenge in itself. Conceptually, I am facing difficulties with the very term for the co-operative in the Yugoslav lands – “zadruga”. It originates from the extended patriarchal family and the term was, later on, used both for the late 19th-century and early 20th-century co-operative movement, as well as the co-operatives formed and organized in socialist Yugoslavia after WWII. Some charity organizations had also been named “zadruga” but I have not found a conceptual piece dealing with this issue so far. Following the framework and concepts, the presentation will briefly discuss the questions and issues central to my research, including connections between co-operatives and both feminist and labor organizations and political parties.

Alex Ghit, *Women’s voluntary associations with “the state back in”: Potentials and conundrums*

Existing histories of women's voluntary associations in South-Eastern Europe are frequently histories of "the excluded" and "the marginalized", in which – from the second half of the nineteenth century – middle class women (especially) created for themselves distinct spaces of influence and action, never fully participating politically and therefore never fully involved in state building or complicit in, for example, the abuses of state power. My research on Romanian-language women's organizing has led me to think that women's voluntary associations were, very often, not independent from empire and state nor, usually, counterweights to male-dominated politics. Rather, they were part of state structures (albeit in particular ways) and were aligned with the broader ideological cleavages of their time. Carefully cultivated ties to prominent politicians, reliance on public subsidies, indirect or even direct involvement in electoral struggles and parliamentary debates, ideological positionings that transcended "feminism" or "women's emancipation", involvement in party politics, or the steady process of professionalization of women's activists into public sector of social and medical professionals – these phenomena characterized both Transylvanian Romanian women's organizing in the Kingdom of Hungary before 1918 and women's activism in interwar Bucharest. How then to write histories of women's associational life in Southeastern Europe with "the state back in"? What would be the challenges encountered in using the tools of political history? What do we risk overemphasizing and downplaying when researching women's associational life with some of the tools of political history? My paper will use several examples from my dissertation research and my submissions as a sub-editor of the Habsburg Empire cluster of documents submitted to the Women and Social Movements in Modern Empires digital database as starting points for tentative reflection and discussion on these issues.

Isidora Grubački, *Defining feminist associations in interwar Yugoslavia*

In my PhD project, I research intellectual and political history of feminisms in interwar Yugoslavia, exploring the changes and transformations interwar feminisms underwent in the period often described as the "age of crisis". In doing so, I explore the nexus between organizations, individual women's trajectories, and political thought and concepts, and I see the project as an exercise in intellectual history. In this presentation, I will focus more

specifically on organizations, and discuss some questions I found relevant concerning them. One question concerns categorization of women's organizations (as opposed to all-male or mixed organizations), and the detail of what *feminist* organizations in the case study under research were. Rather than proposing my own definition of a feminist organization, I explore the use of the term by the historical actors themselves, and ask what were the political implications of this change of vocabulary, i.e. the emergence of a self-described feminist organizations (as opposed to, for example, charitable women's organizations). Further on, I ask what were the concepts associated with feminism, and how the women themselves discussed their organizing. In exploring these issues, I will rely on the methodology of conceptual history and contextualist approach, putting specific attention to the political dimension of conceptual change. While this kind of approach has its limitations (which I will also discuss), I argue that it is valuable for enhancing our understanding of feminist history, but – as I will show - also with the relationship of feminism and state.